



September/October 2003



SCHOOL FINANCE UPDATE

A Monthly Newsletter Published by the School Finance Division

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Linda McCulloch, State Superintendent

This monthly newsletter is emailed to school districts, county superintendents, county treasurers, and auditors. The newsletter is intended to reach all district staff involved in budgeting, accounting, enrollment, special education funding, and federal programs. Please forward this information to all interested parties. Got suggestions for items to include here? We'd love to hear from you!

Why Was the October 2003 Enrollment Reporting So "Sluggish"?



OPI received numerous reports that the MAEFAIRS enrollment system on Citrix (IRIS) operated very slowly. Some users reported they were unable to logon and had to try later.

We appreciate the effort made by MAEFAIRS users to submit the Fall Enrollment Reports on time. We received 96% of the reports on time!

According to the OPI technology staff, the deadline for submitting the Annual Data Collection (ADC) was extended a week to accommodate the system's sluggishness due to a high volume of users. At times there were 100+ users accessing the system.

We're sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused MAEFAIRS users in submitting the Fall Enrollment Report. OPI is working to speed up the response, which is expected to be improved by the time Spring Enrollment is reported in February. Thank you for your patience.

Chart of Accounts is Updated

In mid-September, each district clerk and county superintendent should have received a hardcopy of the updated Chart of Accounts for the Montana School Accounting Manual. The update contains

new Federal and state grant codes that have been implemented for FY 2003-04 and several account changes necessary to implement GASB 34 requirements.

OPI expects to post an electronic update of the entire School Accounting Manual before December 1. For additional copies of the Chart of Accounts, contact Mike Waterman at (406) 444-4524 or mwaterman@state.mt.us.

Need a binder for your School Accounting Manual?
Call Nica at 444-4401, or ncarte@state.mt.us.

Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) Online

Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) are available online! An easy way to search the codes is by clicking on the link below. Mark the link as a Favorite and you will have easy access the next time you need to do a search:

<http://www.opi.state.mt.s/masterMCASearch.html>

For questions or additional information, please contact:
Joan Anderson (406) 444-1960
janderson@state.mt.us

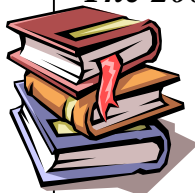
School Block Grant to be Distributed In November

On November 25, 2003, OPI will distribute seventy percent (70%) of the State School Block Grant under HB124 (Revenue code 3444) and the Combined School Block Grant under HB 424 (Revenue Code 3445) to districts. Payment


amounts will match the anticipated revenues in each fund on the FY 2003-04 district budget forms. The remaining 30% will be paid in May 2004. Coops do not receive School Block Grants or Combined Block Grants. Contact Bonnie Maze, (406) 444-3249 or bmaze@state.mt.us.

November High School Bus Rider Count was REPEALED

HB 424 repealed the transportation laws requiring a count of high school bus riders in November. Consequently, there will be no ridership count this year. The TR-1 bus route forms still request a count of eligible and ineligible riders, which is used for OPI's reporting purposes. However, eligibility for high school riders is no longer based on a count taken during November. Contact: Maxine Mougeot, (406) 444-3096 or mmougeot@state.mt.us.



The 2003 Montana School Law Books have arrived!!

OPI is now shipping to schools who have pre-ordered. Books can be purchased for \$10 by filling out the order form located at: 

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/legaldivision/schoollaworderform.pdf>

Other Impacts of SB 424 on Transportation

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS of the transportation law changes under SB 424 (2003 Session) are listed below:

1. The bus reimbursement rate is now based solely on the rated capacity (size) of the bus;
2. The number of riders on the bus does not affect the bus reimbursement rate. There still *must be at least one eligible rider on the bus* in order to claim reimbursement;

3. TR-1 bus route forms for all routes were due to OPI in mid-October. Previously, the elementary routes were due in October and routes with high school riders were due in December; and

4. A signed attendance agreement will typically no longer have any impact on the bus mileage reimbursement rate, but a signed attendance agreement is still necessary in order to offer the parent/guardian of a nonresident student an Individual Transportation Contract.

The following laws DID NOT change:

1. Each route must have at least one "eligible transportee" to receive state and county reimbursement. In other words, there has to be at least one student who lives more than 3 miles from the school or is otherwise eligible under 20-10-101, MCA;

A bus route must have at least one eligible rider to receive state and county reimbursement.

2. If a resident district signs an Attendance Agreement allowing a student to be transported as an eligible transportee of another district, then either district can offer the parent an Individual Contract for mileage, if needed. Usually, the district of attendance will transport the student;

3. To cross the district's boundary and pick up nonresident students, trustees must get annual written permission from the other district. A district can cross its boundary for a safe turnaround point without having written consent, as long as no nonresident students board the bus; and



4. A high school route that stays within the high school boundary can transport PK-8 students between elementary districts within the high school district. However, an elementary student crossing elementary district boundaries on a high school bus must have an Attendance Agreement signed by the resident elementary district in order to be eligible for an Individual Contract for reimbursement.

Questions? Contact Maxine Mougeot at (406) 444-3096 or mmougeot@state.mt.us.

MASBO Schedules "New Clerk's Workshop"

The Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) will hold a 2-day session for new clerks (or anyone who is interested in the clerks' duties) on November 13 and 14, 2003 in Helena.

To register, go to:

<http://www.masbo.com/New%20Clerk%20Brochure%20-%20April.pdf>

This session, presented by veteran clerks from the MASBO organization, has gotten "rave reviews" from past participants. MASBO Contact: Lynda Brannon. (406) 442-5599 or masbo@in-tch.com.

In Case You Missed It.....

New Coding System for Federal and State Grants Now Effective

The new numbering system is required in FY 2003-04. Click here for a full list of **"New Codes for FY2004"**. OPI Contact: Jim Oberembt at (406) 444-1257 or joberembt@state.mt.us.

Results of Summer Survey

At the 2003 Summer Budgeting and Accounting Workshops (July), we asked some questions about Clerks' use of official OPI email and other School Finance electronic resources. Here are some of the results:



Do you receive the School Finance Update Newsletter each month?

78% Yes

9% No

13% No Response Given

Does your school have a bus driver training program established, and if not, do you need assistance?

62% Yes/Adequate

12% No/Need Help

26% No Response Given

On average, how often do you open the OPI web site?

44% 2-5 times each month

22% 1 time each month

17% Daily

3%	Never
2%	More than once each day
12%	No Response Given

Budget Amendment Packets

OPI offers a packet of information about the budget amendment process for school districts:

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/schoolfinance/forms/2002bapacket.pdf> The

packet is approximately 15 pages long and is dated September 2002. NOTE: Districts can amend budgets for unusual enrollment increases after the count date, October 6. OPI Contact: Mike Waterman, (406) 444-4524 or mwaterman@state.mt.us.

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**Check it Out –
eSchool News School Funding Center**

The following site offers information on up-to-the-minute grant programs, funding sources, and technology funding.
<http://www.eschoolnews.com/resources/funding/>

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Useful Websites

List of all Official OPI E-Mails:

<http://www.metnet.state.mt.us/OfficialMail>



OPI's GASB 34 Web Page:

 <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfinance/qasb34.html>.

OPI's "Get Answers" searchable databases:

http://data.opi.state.mt.us/scripts/rightnow.cfg/php.exe/enduser/std_alp.php

Bus Safety and Driver Training Videos:

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/pupiltransport/TrainingVideos.pdf>

School Finance forms and publications:

[http://
www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfinance/forms.html](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfinance/forms.html)

FP-14 Student Attendance Agreement

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/SchoolFinance/forms/FP14.pdf>

FP-14A Special Tuition Rates (used with FP-14)

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/SchoolFinance/Tuition/SpecTuitRates.pdf>

2004 Elections Calendar:

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/SchoolFinance/forms/2004ElectionCal.pdf> . Need more information about elections? Contact Mike Waterman at (406) 444-4524 or mwaterman@state.mt.us.

CFDA Numbers for Federal Grants: <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/FederalPrograms/handbook.html> (Appendix F of the OPI State and Federal Grants Handbook)

Let us know if you are looking for a particular form, and we'll do our best to provide it electronically!

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Coming next month.....

OPI is currently updating the School Accounting Manual and plans to post it electronically in December.

**Happy Halloween!**

What is a mummy's favorite kind of music?....Ragtime!

What music would a TEEN mummy like to listen to?....wRAP!

When are OPI payments made?

- 1) Grants -- On the 10th of each month;
- 2) School food program payments -- By the 25th of each month;
- 3) Direct state aid payments -- Between the 20th and the 25th, based on a set schedule.

All OPI payments are posted at: <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/payments/index.html>

Bookmark that site!!!